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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001494

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#) [RW](#)

SUBJECT: NKUNDA: LOTS OF SMOKE, LITTLE FIRE

REF: A. KINSHASA 01432

[1](#)B. KINSHASA 01452

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) General Nkunda's return to North Kivu apparently is a non-event. Changed circumstances in the province have left Nkunda between a rock and a hard place. Reportedly fleeing Rwanda in advance of an anticipated arrest warrant, and evidently lacking financial or military support from Kigali, Nkunda also finds himself without a support network in the province (reftel A).

[1](#)2. (C) During last year's build-up to the seizure of Bukavu, Nkunda benefited from Governor Eugene Serufuli's turning a blind eye to his recruiting activities -- and, even more importantly, he had the active assistance of then-regional military commander General Obed. Now, however, Serufuli (who believes, probably correctly, that he can continue to be governor of North Kivu after the elections) is interested in enhancing his electoral positioning and credibility by maintaining provincial security, which means opposing Nkunda's activities and, possibly, trying to capture and/or kill him. Likewise, current regional military commander General Amisi (aka Tango Fort) is not one to stand idly by while a rogue military officer attempts to poach his troops. Despite exaggerated rumors that he has up to 17,000 troops, most here (MONUC, Congolese politicians, FARDC and even NGOs) believe that Nkunda actually has closer to about 300-500 men maximum, and even those are not necessarily highly committed followers but disgruntled and opportunistic ex-ANC troops who probably won't stay long in the bush if Nkunda can't pay them.

[1](#)3. (C) Nkunda himself seems to be looking for some way out of his situation. Serufuli told PolCouns on September 13 that he sent his two senior security advisors (Kamanzi and Hitimana, both Hutus) to talk to Nkunda and explain that he has either to leave or be arrested (reftel B). Nkunda told them he has nowhere to go. Minister of Agriculture Paul Musifiri (an MLC politician from North Kivu) told PolCouns he has heard that Nkunda is once again putting out feelers, trying to find a third-country willing to take him in -- perhaps, he speculated, South Africa. Meanwhile, Serufuli is coordinating with MONUC and General Amisi on a strategy to dispatch FARDC troops by MONUC helicopter to arrest Nkunda. (Note: MONUC Head of Office confirmed to PolCouns that these discussions are indeed underway and that MONUC is prepared to support an operation against Nkunda. End Note.) Minister of Defense Adolphe Onusumba told PolCouns September 13 that he is briefed on, and fully supports, this potential operation.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: While it would be foolhardy to dismiss Nkunda's potential to cause problems, particularly in the fragile dynamic of North Kivu, it would be equally foolish and wrong to overestimate his current capabilities. Serufuli's spin is always open to question. In this case however, it appears that Serufuli now would prefer that Nkunda simply disappear again, whether into neighboring Rwanda or anywhere else. This would eliminate a thorny political problem for him personally, and the RCD in general. However, it seems likely that Nkunda truly does not have another viable option and therefore is likely to try to remain in the DRC. RCD politicians such as Onusumba, Tresor Kapuku and Serufuli himself, all of whom maintain close links to Kigali, say that Nkunda is no longer welcome in Rwanda. Even with only 300-500 men he could certainly cause problems, particularly to the ongoing voter registration process. More troubling is the possibility that he could join forces with other rogue elements at large in the province. In many respects, Nkunda's fate may be in Governor Serufuli's hands. Serufuli not only controls political machinery in the province, he exerts de facto control over a substantial military force as well. If Serufuli decides that Nkunda's usefulness really is at an end and that he should be arrested -- or killed resisting arrest -- we would put our money on the Governor.

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